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# Hydrodynamics of GRB Afterglow

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## ABSTRACT

The detection of delayed emission at X-ray optical and radio wavelengths, “after-glow”, suggests that the relativistic shell which emitted the initial GRB due to internal shocks decelerates on encountering an external medium, giving rise to the after-glow. We explore the interaction of a relativistic shell with a uniform inter stellar medium (ISM), up to the non relativistic stage. We demonstrate the importance of several effects that were previously ignored, and must be included in a detailed radiation analysis. At a very early stage (few seconds), the observed bolometric luminosity increases as  $t^2$ . On longer time scales (more than  $\sim 10$  sec), the luminosity drops as  $t^{-1}$ . If the main burst is long enough, an intermediate stage of constant luminosity will form. In this case, the after-glow overlaps the main burst, otherwise there is a time separation between the two. On the long time scale, the flow decelerate in a self similar way, reaching non relativistic velocities after  $\sim 30$  days. Explicit expressions for the radial profiles of this self similar deceleration are given. Due to the deceleration and the accumulation of ISM material, the relation between the observed time, the shock radius, and its Lorentz factor, is given by  $t = R/16\gamma^2c$  which is a factor of 8 different from the usual expression. The majority of particles are those of the original ejecta (and not the ISM) up to about  $\sim 900$ s. These particles reach sub-relativistic velocities on a time scale of  $\sim 2$  hours, well before the flow becomes sub-relativistic. Therefore the ejecta particles are probably unimportant for most of the after-glow radiation. We show that even though only a small fraction of the energy is given to the electrons, most of the energy can be radiated over time. If this fraction is greater than  $\sim 10\%$  radiation losses will significantly influence the hydrodynamical evolution at early times (less than 1 day).

*Subject headings:*  $\gamma$ -rays:burst; hydrodynamics:shocks; relativity

## 1. Introduction

The isotropy of GRBs angular distribution combined with the non-homogeneous distribution suggests that GRBs originate from cosmological distances and therefore radiate energies of order of  $10^{51}$  erg. Considerations of optical depth then show that the bursts are produced by the dissipation of kinetic energy of highly relativistic shells with Lorentz factor  $\eta > 100$  (see Piran 1996 for review). This dissipation can be either due to internal shocks or due to the surrounding ISM. Sari & Piran (1997) have shown that deceleration on the ISM could not give rise to the variability observed in the bursts (unless the process is very inefficient and involves much more than  $10^{51}$  erg), while internal shocks could produce efficiently the observed fluctuations (Kobayashi, Piran and Sari 1997), if the “inner engine” has considerable fluctuations. It is therefore likely that the main GRB is due to internal shocks.

These cosmological models predict that after the main GRB event the ejecta decelerate due to interaction with the ISM, emitting radiation at longer and longer wavelengths (Paczynski & Rhoads 1993, Katz 1994, Mészáros & Rees 1997). This emission has been detected recently for several GRBs due to an accurate determination of their position. The quantitative agreement between the deceleration models and the measurements is good (Waxman 1997a, Wijers, Rees & Mészáros 1997, Waxman 1997b). Since the quality of data for the after-glow is higher than for the burst itself, more quantitative results are needed.

In this letter we explore the hydrodynamics of the deceleration of a relativistic fireball on a uniform ISM. We discuss the relation between the rise time of the after-glow and the time of the main burst. We use the analytic solution found by Blandford and McKee (1976) to describe the swept up ISM and derive an expression for the position of the original ejecta and its Lorentz factor. We show that although only a small fraction of the internal energy is given to the radiating electrons, a considerable amount of the energy can be radiated over

the deceleration period.

## 2. The Rise of The After-Glow

The problem of deceleration of a relativistic shell onto the ISM is determined by four parameters: the initial shell's Lorentz factor  $\eta$ , the energy of the shell  $E = E_{52}10^{52}\text{erg}$ , the width of the shell (observer frame)  $\Delta$  and the ISM density  $n = n_1\text{cm}^{-3}$ . The basic details of the interaction between the shell and ISM where given in Sari & Piran 1995 and we briefly review the main ideas. The treatment in this section is approximate and correction factors of order unity may need to be included in a more precise treatment.

When the shell encounters the ISM, two shocks are formed: a forward shock accelerating the ISM and a reverse shock decelerating the shell. The forward shock is always highly relativistic since the initial Lorentz factor  $\eta \gg 1$ . Let  $f$  be the density ratio between the shell and the ISM given by

$$f = E/16\pi\eta^2\Delta nm_p c^4\gamma^4 t^2. \quad (1)$$

where we used  $R = 2c\gamma^2t$  for the radius of the shell,  $t$  is the observed time. The reverse shock is relativistic if  $f < \eta^2$  reducing the Lorentz factor of the shell to  $\gamma = \eta^{1/2}f^{1/4}/\sqrt{2}$  and Newtonian if  $f > \eta^2$  making only negligible change to the shell's Lorentz factor i.e.,  $\gamma = \eta$ . At early stages,  $f \gg \eta^2$  so the reverse shock is Newtonian and the shell's Lorentz factor equals its initial value  $\gamma = \eta$ . However due to the increase in the area of the shell, it produces internal energy in an increasing rate of

$$L = 32\pi c^5 nm_p \gamma^8 t^2 = 2.5 \times 10^{50} \gamma_{300}^8 n_1 t_s^2 \frac{\text{erg}}{\text{s}}, \quad (2)$$

where we use  $t_s$  for the time in seconds. Assuming that the cooling is fast (Sari, Narayan & Piran 1996), the observed bolometric luminosity is proportional to the internal energy increase rate and is therefore also given by Eq. (2). This behavior will continue until either

the shell has given the ISM an energy comparable to its initial energy at

$$t_E = \left( \frac{3E}{32\pi c^5 n m_p \eta^8} \right)^{1/3} = 5 E_{52}^{1/3} \eta_{300}^{-8/3} n_1^{-8/3} \text{ s}, \quad (3)$$

or until the reverse shock is no longer Newtonian, i.e.  $f = \eta^2$  at

$$t_N = \left( \frac{E}{16\pi \Delta n m_p c^4 \eta^8} \right)^{1/2} = 2 E_{52}^{1/2} \left( \frac{\Delta}{6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-1/2} \eta_{300}^4 n_1^{-1/2} \text{ s}, \quad (4)$$

whichever comes first. As in Sari & Piran (1995) we define the ratio between the two expressions as

$$\xi \equiv \frac{t_N}{t_E} = \left( \frac{E}{36\pi n m_p c^2 \Delta^3 \eta^8} \right)^{1/6} = 0.4 E_{52}^{1/6} \left( \frac{\Delta}{6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-1/2} \eta_{300}^{-4/3} n_1^{-1/6}. \quad (5)$$

For  $\xi > 1$ , the energy is dissipated to internal energy before the Lorentz factor of the shell is reduced considerably. If  $\xi < 1$ , then the reverse shock turns relativistic before the kinetic energy of the shell was emitted. In this case the Lorentz factor decreases with time according to

$$\gamma(t) = \eta^{1/2} f(t)^{1/4} / \sqrt{2} = 300 E_{52}^{1/8} \left( \frac{\Delta}{6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-1/8} n_1^{-1/8} t_s^{-1/4}. \quad (6)$$

Note that at this stage the Lorentz factor  $\gamma$  is independent of its initial value  $\eta$ . Substituting this in Eq. (2) we get that the luminosity is constant in time and given by:

$$L = \frac{E}{2\Delta/c}. \quad (7)$$

This stage will continue until the shell has given the shocked ISM energy comparable with its own at

$$t_E = 2\Delta/c. \quad (8)$$

At this time the shell has decelerated to Lorentz factor of

$$\gamma = \left( \frac{E}{256\pi \Delta^3 n m_p c^2} \right)^{1/8} = 120 E_{52}^{1/8} \left( \frac{\Delta}{6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}} \right)^{-3/8} n_1^{-1/8}, \quad (9)$$

independent of the initial Lorentz factor  $\eta$ . After the time  $t_E$ , given by Eq. (3) or 8 the flow will be described by a self similar solution as the ISM energy is now constant and comparable to the initial energy of the shell  $E$ . As we shall show in the next section, from this time  $\gamma \propto R^{-3/2} \propto t^{-3/8}$  and therefore the observed luminosity decreases as  $t^{-1}$ . This behavior is illustrated in figure 1.

### 3. Relation with the main burst

If the main burst is produced by internal shocks, then the width of the shell,  $\Delta$ , can be inferred directly from the observed main burst duration  $\Delta = ct_{mb}$ . For long bursts,  $t_{mb} \sim 20$  sec and  $\Delta \sim 6 \times 10^{11}$  cm while for short bursts  $t_{mb} \sim 0.1$  sec and  $\Delta \sim 3 \times 10^9$  cm. The initial Lorentz factor must satisfy  $\eta > 100$  for the emission of the main burst not to be opaque. The reverse shock is therefore likely to be Newtonian for short bursts and might be relativistic for long bursts. Both cases are therefore of physical interest.

If the reverse shock is relativistic, then the observed peak of the after-glow emission is flat and overlaps the observed GRB emitted by internal shocks. Both end after an observed time of  $\sim \Delta/c$ . If the reverse shock is Newtonian, then the after-glow peaks on  $t_E$  given by Eq. (3) which is longer by a factor of

$$\frac{3}{2}\xi^2 > 1 \quad (10)$$

than the main burst duration  $\Delta/c$ . The duration and luminosity of the main burst and the after-glow rise are shown for the Newtonian and relativistic cases in figure 1.

In both cases, the properties of the main burst and the after-glow are very different. The main burst is usually highly variable (depending on the internal structure of the shell) while the after-glow, which is due to external shocks is expected to be smooth (Sari & Piran 1997). The after-glow's spectrum should peak, in the beginning, around 30KeV-10MeV

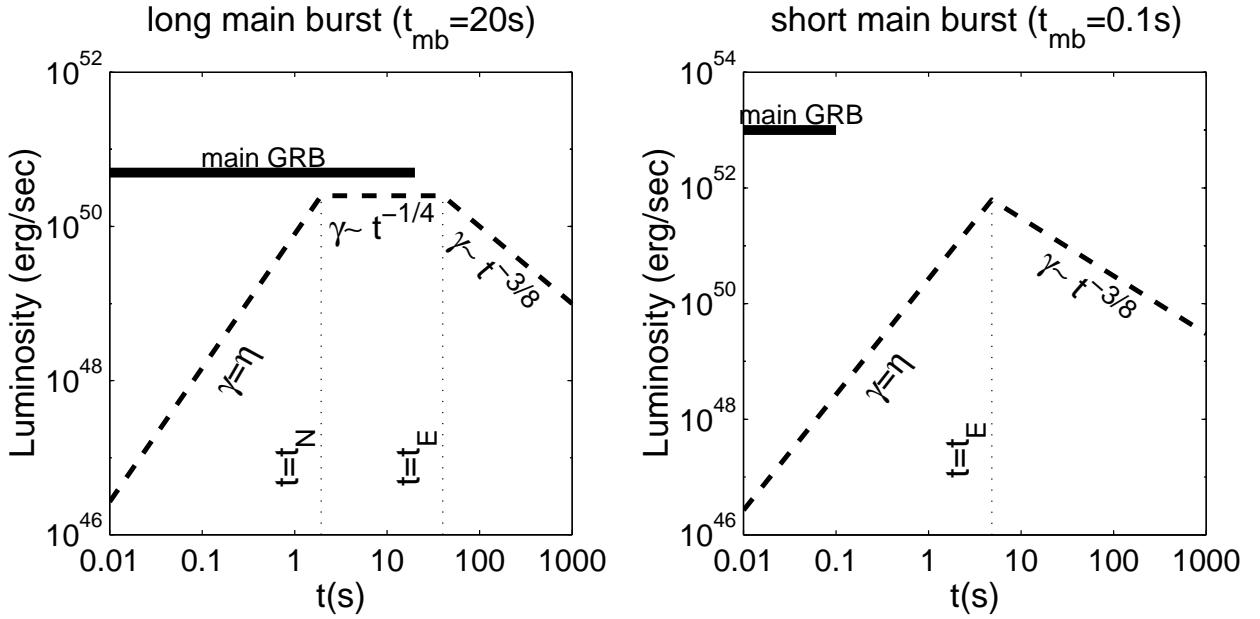


Fig. 1.— The luminosity from the ISM as function of time in the Relativistic (left frame) and Newtonian (right frame) cases is drawn in dashed line. At the early stage, the Lorentz factor is constant and the luminosity increases due to the increase in shell area. When the ISM has energy comparable with the total energy ( $t = t_E$ ), a self similar solution is established and the luminosity drops as  $t^{-1}$ . If the shell is thick (typical for long main bursts) the reverse shock becomes relativistic at  $t_N$ , before the self-similar solution is established and some deceleration begins, leading to constant luminosity. Solid line gives the luminosity of the main GRB. Both frames use  $E = 10^{52}$  erg and  $\eta = 300$ . The behavior  $L \sim t^{-1}$  and  $\gamma \sim t^{-3/8}$  continues up to the non-relativistic stage which is about 30days.

depending on the fraction of internal energy in electrons and magnetic field (Sari, Narayan and Piran 1996). If the peak energy is too high it might not be observed in the first stage by the BATSE equipment. However later as the ejecta decelerates the emission peak decreases in time and should cross the soft  $\gamma$ -ray region.

#### 4. Self-Similar Solution and Properties of the Original Ejecta

We begin with a simple consideration based upon conservation of energy. When most of the energy has been given to the ISM, and assuming that radiation losses are small, the energy in the shocked ISM is constant and approximately equal to the initial kinetic energy  $E$ . The shocked ISM rest mass is  $M \propto R^3$ . Since it was heated by a relativistic shock its energy in the observer frame is  $\sim M\gamma^2$ . Comparing this with the constant total energy of the system  $E$  we get that

$$\gamma \propto R^{-3/2}. \quad (11)$$

This is also the scaling law for the shock wave Lorentz factor  $\Gamma$  since for a relativistic shock  $\Gamma = \sqrt{2}\gamma$ .

The scaling law, Eq. (11), implies a quantitative but important change in the relation between  $t$ ,  $R$  and  $\gamma$ . Photons that were emitted from the shock while it has propagated a small distance  $\delta R$  will be observed on time-scale of  $\delta t \sim \delta R / 2\Gamma^2 c$ . Integrating this over time using the scaling law 11 we get  $t = R / 8\Gamma^2 c$ , or

$$t = \frac{R}{16\gamma^2 c}. \quad (12)$$

Compared with the commonly used expression  $R / 2\gamma^2 c$  (Mészáros and Rees 1997, Waxman 1997a, Wijers, Rees and Meszaros 1997, Waxman 1997b), this expression is factor of 8 smaller. This difference is important when trying to fit quantitatively the observed afterglow data. Note however that the differential relation is independent of the deceleration,

and is therefore given by  $\delta t = \delta R / 4\gamma^2 c$ .

Blandford and McKee (1976) have described an analytical solution for the case in which the scaling law 11 applies. Using their solution with several simplifications and some algebraic manipulations we get

$$\begin{aligned} n(r, t) &= 4n\gamma \left[ 1 + 16\gamma^2(1 - r/R) \right]^{-5/4} \\ \gamma(r, t) &= \gamma \left[ 1 + 16\gamma^2(1 - r/R) \right]^{-1/2} \\ e(r, t) &= 4nm_p c^2 \gamma^2 \left[ 1 + 16\gamma^2(1 - r/R) \right]^{-17/12} \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

where  $n(r, t)$ ,  $\gamma(r, t)$  and  $e(r, t)$  are, respectively, the density, Lorentz factor and energy density of the material behind the shock (not to be confused with the ISM density  $n$  and the Lorentz factor of material just behind the shock  $\gamma(t) = \gamma(R, t)$ ). The scaling laws of  $R(t)$  and  $\gamma(t)$  can be found using these profiles and demanding that the total energy in the flow would be equal to  $E$ :

$$\begin{aligned} R(t) &= \left( \frac{17Et}{\pi m_p nc} \right)^{1/4} = 3.2 \times 10^{16} E_{52}^{1/4} n_1^{-1/4} t_s^{1/4} \text{ cm} \\ \gamma(t) &= \frac{1}{4} \left( \frac{17E}{\pi nm_p c^5 t^3} \right)^{1/8} = 260 E_{52}^{1/8} n_1^{-1/8} t_s^{-3/8} \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

This solution can serve as a starting point for detailed radiation emission calculations and comparison with observations. The scalings 14 are, of course, consistent with the scalings 11 and 12 which were derived using conservation of energy, but supply the exact coefficient that can not be produced otherwise. The time for which the flow behind the shock becomes sub-relativistic follows from Eq. (14) as

$$t = 30 E_{52}^{1/3} n_1^{-1/3} \text{ days.} \quad (15)$$

We now turn to see the role of the particles from the original ejecta in the flow. The number of protons (or electrons) in the ejecta is  $E/\eta m_p c^2$ , and is larger than the number of

ISM protons swept by the shock ( $4\pi R^3 n/3$ ) up to the time

$$t = \left( \frac{3^4}{17^3 4^4 \pi} \frac{E}{nm_p \eta^4 c^5} \right)^{1/3} = 850 E_{52}^{1/3} n_1^{-1/3} \eta_{300}^{-4/3} \text{ s} \quad (16)$$

We now use the solution 13 to determine the evolution of the original ejecta material (or any other fluid element). Taking the derivative of the fluid Lorentz factor along its line of motion we get

$$\frac{d\gamma_e}{dt} = -\frac{7}{8} \frac{\gamma_e}{t} \quad (17)$$

so that a fluid element which had a Lorentz factor  $\gamma_0$  at  $t_0$ , will have

$$\gamma_e(t) = \gamma_0 \left( \frac{t}{t_0} \right)^{-7/8}. \quad (18)$$

The exponent  $-7/8$  shows a fast deceleration relative to the shock deceleration exponent  $-3/8$ . For the Newton case, the ejecta had a Lorentz factor  $\eta$  at the beginning of the self-similar stage at time  $T_E$  given by Eq. (3), therefore reaching sub-relativistic velocities after

$$t_{sr} = t_E \eta^{8/7} = 0.9 E_{52}^{1/3} n_1^{-1/3} \eta_{300}^{-32/21} \text{ hours} \quad (19)$$

For the relativistic case we get

$$t_{sr} = t_E \gamma^{8/7}(t_E) = 2.6 E_{52}^{1/7} n_1^{-1/7} \left( \frac{\Delta}{6 \times 10^{11} \text{ cm}} \right)^{4/7} \text{ hours.} \quad (20)$$

This time scale of  $\sim 2$  hours is much shorter than the time in which the whole flow becomes relativistic  $\sim 30$  days. It is therefore expected that most of the afterglow radiation, that was seen on time scale of days and even month, is not related to the particles of the initial ejecta but to the shocked ISM.

## 5. Radiative Corrections

In the previous sections we have assumed that the energy in the system is constant. This assumption can not be strictly correct since the radiation takes some energy from the

relativistic shell. We define  $\epsilon_e$  to be the fraction of the internal energy that is radiated, and lost from the system. Typically this should be the fraction of energy given by the shock to electrons and is estimated to be around 10% (Waxman 1997a,b). This number seems to be negligible, and therefore the energy loss was neglected by previous analyses. However the deceleration occurs over several orders of magnitude in time and Lorentz factor and the fireball energy  $E$  is given again and again to newly heated material, leading to more and more energy losses.

The energy loss rate during the deceleration is given by  $4096\pi c^5 n m_p \gamma^8 t^2$  (the coefficient is different from Eq. 2, due to the relation  $R = 16\gamma^2 ct$  which is relevant in the deceleration stage) multiplied by  $\epsilon_e$ . Substituting the expression for  $\gamma(t)$  from the self similar solution (Eq. 14) we get

$$\frac{dE}{dt} = -\frac{17}{16}\epsilon_e \frac{E}{t}, \quad (21)$$

so that

$$E(t) = E_0 \left( \frac{t}{t_0} \right)^{-17\epsilon_e/16}. \quad (22)$$

Since the observed initial time of the afterglow is about 10s then after about a week the energy is reduced by a factor of  $\sim 3$  for  $\epsilon_e = 0.1$  or a factor of  $\sim 30$  if  $\epsilon_e = 0.3$ . These factors must be taken into account given the accuracy of current data.

The derivation of the above exponent,  $-17\epsilon_e/16$ , used the exact coefficients in Eq. (14), which were obtained from the self-similar solution. Without this solution the exponent could only be estimated approximately. Note that the use of Eq. (14) is valid as long as  $\epsilon_e$  is small enough that the energy loss could be approximated as a small “radiative correction”.

This radiation losses will also slightly effect the scaling of the shock radius and Lorentz factor as function of time. The approximate scaling including the radiation losses can be obtained by substituting Eq. (22) into Eq. (14).

## 6. Discussion

We have explored the early evolution of the interaction of a relativistic shell with the ISM. If the main GRB is short enough, separation is expected between the main burst and the afterglow luminosity peak, while if it is long enough an overlap is expected. This property might be detectable in BATSE's data.

We have used the self similar solution derived by Blandford and McKee (1976) to obtain an explicit expression for the radial profile in the self similar stage. This solution can be used in further analyses when considering a more detailed calculation of the radiation from the heated ISM.

A relation between the shock's radius, the material Lorentz factor and the observed time was found to be  $t = R/16\gamma^2c$  instead of the commonly used expression  $t = R/2\gamma^2c$  due to the fact that ISM is collected so the shock moves faster than the material behind it, and due to the deceleration of the shell, having higher Lorentz factor at earlier time. This relation was obtained assuming that the radiation is emitted from the shock front. On long time scales  $\sim 1\text{day}$ , when the cooling of electrons is not fast enough it might be that the width of the radiating zone will smear the observed radiation over longer time scales.

The role of energy loss due to the radiation was found to be non-negligible even if the part of the internal energy that is radiated at each time is small. Thus radiation can reduce the total energy in the system after a week by a factor of 3 if  $\epsilon_e = 0.1$  or a factor of 30 if  $\epsilon_e = 0.3$ .

The data of GRB970228 and GRB970508 fit radiation models, with in a factor of 2, without taking into account radiation losses (Waxman 1997a,b). We can therefore roughly estimate  $\epsilon_e \leq 0.1$ . On time scale which is more than  $\sim 1\text{day}$ , the electron's cooling time is long so only a small fraction of their energy is radiated. Since most of the observations

where made after  $\sim 1$  day, the fraction of the energy that is given to the electrons can be high (more than 10%) without leading to considerable energy loss, and with no effect on the observations made after  $\sim 1$  day. However, in such a case, the energy losses at earlier time will be considerable and will therefor require a much higher initial energy.

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